Crisis Communications on a Budget in the City of South Fulton

20,000+
Interactions
Over 20,000 in total monthly engagements

10X
Adoption Rate
It'sMyTown was ten times faster in acquiring users than newsletter or social channels

Zero
IT Skills Needed
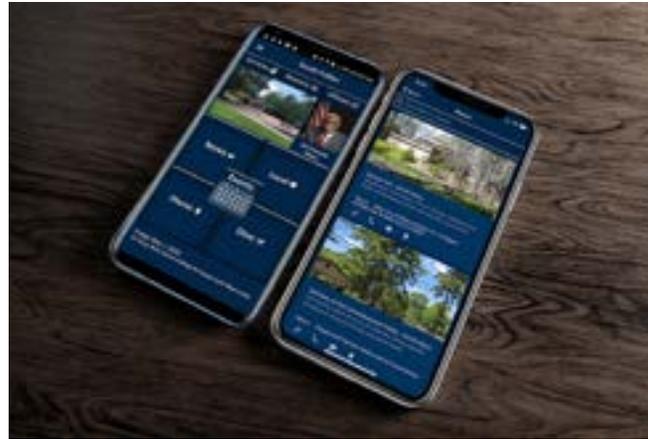Setup was quick, painless, and allowed the city to be up and running in days

82%
Using Mobile
82% of Americans now use their mobile devices to access online information and services
(Source: Statistica)

At a Glance

The City of South Fulton, GA is updating residents with urgent information regarding COVID-19, including local business openings, through a paired user application and content management platform. The same platform has enabled the city to provide online access to municipal services and online payment.

The Challenge

Like many local governments, Covid-19 required the City of South Fulton to shift their communication and community engagement strategy to better meet the needs of their residents during a public health crisis. They realized they needed a better way to connect their constituents to vital information and services during the pandemic, one that could be leveraged to inform their residents of changes in community status, relay the latest safety measures and recommendations, and post official communications from government representatives. Like most other cities, they needed to do it without increasing their IT budget, requiring additional IT support, or impacting their productivity.

Fifty-four percent of citizens now expect government services to be offered online and 30% of citizens expect those processes to become simpler. ITsimple enabled the City of South Fulton to meet both of these demands and do so during difficult and challenging times. With a population of 99,155, the City of South Fulton is the 8th largest city in the state of Georgia. Bordering Atlanta from the south and west, it's the 3rd largest city in the biggest county in the state, giving it outsized regional influence and prominence.

"We are now serving everyone everywhere people are and mobile plays a big role in that. ITsimple's community engagement platform enables us to send/receive feedback in real-time and I like the fact it ties with our social channels too. It's user-friendly and saves us time by having most of our communications channels controlled in one dashboard".
--Gary Leftwich, Communications Director

The City of South Fulton is using ITsimple's community engagement platform SpotlightCMS and It'sMyTown city app to address these challenges.

Real Solutions, Real Results

The Solution

The City of South Fulton partnered with ITsimple to create a reliable and trusted method of crisis communication for their citizens that allowed them to update their community in real-time with urgent information regarding the pandemic, provide online access to municipal services and billpay opportunities, and support local businesses by communicating their availability and status.

SpotlightCMS is a real-time community engagement platform that enables management of multiple publication channels - mobile, web and all social media presences - from one user-friendly dashboard and single data entry point. SpotlightCMS pairs with a free end user app, It'sMyTown, that puts information and services in one location for city residents and makes it far easier for them to engage and find the information they need. It has no privacy concerns or social media dependency because no registration is required and no personal information is gathered or stored, and helps build a sense of community and support local engagement.

Outcomes

- The city was able to localize their crisis communications to reflect the needs of their unique circumstances and constituent needs, and build community engagement while doing so.
- The city was quickly able to reach over 1000 residents and support their rapidly expanding user base.
- The city can simultaneously publish all their content updates across their website, app, and social media presences when information changes rapidly, saving them both time and money
- Since SpotlightCMS has no back-end IT requirements, the City of South Fulton was able to conserve its IT resources both financially and in terms of maintenance and support.

Lessons learned

- The pubic responds well to an official mobile app that doesn't require registration or collect personal user information.
- A responsive website doesn't have the same essential features as a mobile app. Notifications, location and camera based services, mobile calendars navigation apps integrations and more.
- When the city checked the percentage of traffic to its official website from mobile devices, it was clear that a mobile app had to be part of the communications strategy and budget.
- Today's technologies can deliver mobile capabilities to cities with no technical skills or infrastructure required on their part.

"This is another way we are leveraging technology to provide world-class service to those who live and work in our city"
said City Manager Odie Donald II.

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